

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL TIJUANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1509

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

UNCLAS TIJUANA 0404

E.

O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CPRS MX

SUBJECT: DESTRUCTION OF AMERICAN PROPERTY IN LANDSLIDE
(MARTIN LAMONT, WALTER THOMPSON, LEONARD JOHNSON)

1. ON JULY 29, 1976 CONGEN WAS VISITED BY US CITIZEN MARTIN LAMONT, RESIDENT OF VILLAGE OF SAN MIGUEL, B.C., ABOUT SEVEN MILES NORTH OF CITY OF ENSENADA. MR. LAMONT STATED APPROXIMATELY 60 AMERICAN FAMILIES LIVING IN THAT AREA CONCERNED SONIC BOOMS CAUSED BY US NAVAL AIRCRAFT WERE TRIGGERING NATURAL SLUMP LINE WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO THEIR HOMES. HE STATED HE VISITED COMMANDER OF PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION, 11TH NAVAL DISTRICT IN SAN DIEGO AND WAS PROMISED PROBLEM WOULD BE STUDIED BUT NO CORRECTIVE ACTION RESULTED. CONGEN CONTACTED COMMANDER, 11TH NAVAL DISTRICT, VICE ADMIRAL (NOW REAR ADMIRAL) SAMUEL GRAVELY, AND OBTAINED APPOINTMENT FOR LAMONT. CONGEN REQUESTED LAMONT INFORM US RESULT HIS CONVERSATION WITH GRAVELY. LAMONT DID NOT RETURN AND TELEPHONE CONTACT WITH LAMONT NOT POSSIBLE SINCE SAN MIGUEL HAS NO TELEPHONE SERVICE. COPIES OF LAMONT'S LETTER ADDRESSED TO CONGEN AND PETITION ADDRESSED TO COMMANDER 11TH NAVAL DISTRICT AND SIGNED BY 30 AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF SAN MIGUEL WERE FORWARDED TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO (FOR NAVATT AND CCS).

2. ON AUGUST 14, 1976 (DATE PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA VISITED TIJUANA) THE SLUMP LINE COLLAPSED COVERING THE BAJA CALIFORNIA TRANSPENINSULAR HIGHWAY, COMPLETELY DESTROYING TWO HOMES OWNED BY AMERICANS (WALTER THOMPSON AND LEONARD JOHNSON) AND
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SEVERELY DAMAGING MR. LAMONT'S HOME. A HOME OWNED BY MEXICAN

CITIZEN WAS ALSO DAMAGED. FORTUNATELY THERE WAS NO LOSS OF LIFE OR INJURIES. ALTHOUGH HALF OF TRANSPENINSULAR HIGHWAY BETWEEN TIJUANA AND ENSENADA IS BLOCKED WHILE ROAD IS CLEARED, THERE IS A GOOD SECONDARY ROAD THAT CAN BE UTILIZED FROM LA FONDA TO ENSENADA.

3. CONOFF VISITED SAN MIGUEL ON AUGUST 19 AND SPOKE WITH MEXICAN AND AMERICAN RESIDENTS. THEY BITTERLY COMPLAINED ABOUT SONIC BOOMS MADE BY US NAVY AIRCRAFT AND STATED ONE HAD OCCURRED THAT MORNING AT ABOUT 10 AM. THEY ALSO STATED THEIR CONCERN THAT ENSENADA EARTHEN DAM MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY THE SONIC BOOMS AND COLLAPSE RESULTING IN EXTENSIVE LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY.

4. AT TIME OF CONOFF VISIT TO SAN MIGUEL, LAMONT INFORMED HIM HE WAS COUNSELED BY MEXICAN FRIEND NOT TO MAKE FURTHER CONTACT WITH CONGEN OR OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ABOUT THE PROBLEM BECAUSE MANY AMERICANS RESIDING IN SAN MIGUEL LIVING THERE ILLEGALLY AND SUCH CONTACT MIGHT RESULT IN THEIR DEPORTATION.

5. ON AUGUST 20, 1976 LAMONT VISITED CONGEN AND SHOWED CONOFF LETTER DATED AUGUST 17 FROM ADMIRAL GRAVELY WHICH REJECTS MR. LAMONT'S CLAIM THAT SONIC BOOMS CAUSED LANDSLIDE. LAMONT ALSO GAVE CONOFF COPIES OF THIRTEEN LETTERS FROM LOCAL AMERICAN RESIDENTS ATTESTING TO SEVERITY OF THE BOOMS. COPIES OF ALL CORRESPONDENCE BEING FORWARDED TO DEPARTMENT BY AIRGRAM.

6. LAMONT TOLD CONOFF HE INTENDS TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST US NAVY AND MEXICAN HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT. CONOFF SUGGESTED HE CONSULT WITH MEXICAN ATTORNEY AND ALSO AMERICAN ATTORNEY.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: CONGEN CONCERNED SUPERSONIC FLIGHTS NEAR ENSENADA MAY RESULT IN SERIOUS PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM HERE AND SUGGESTS DEPARTMENT MAY WISH BRING ABOVE TO ATTENTION APPROPRIATE NAVY AUTHORITIES.
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